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SUBJECT: OES ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARNISH ENGAGES GOVERNMENT
OF INDIA ON IREC 2010

A) NEW DELHI 03663, B) NEW DELHI 0226,
C) 2008 NEW DELHI 2386, D) 2008 NEW DELHI 2998,
E) 2008 NEW DELHI 1498

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Oceans, Environment and Sciences Bureau (OES) OES Acting Assistant Secretary Reno Harnish lead a multi-stakeholder delegation to New Delhi to engage GOI ministries on the lessons learned from the 2008 Washington International Renewable Energy Conference (WIREC) in order to support the GOI effort to host the 2010 International Renewable Energy Conference (IREC) in New Delhi. The GOI has scheduled IREC 2010 for February 17-19, 2010 and has just begun preliminary preparations. The GOI warmly welcomed the delegation's input which clearly provided a much needed kick-start to GOI planning. Officials of the several other energy ministries and Ministry of External Affairs stated that they would actively support IREC-2010 under the lead of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE). MNRE Secretary Gupta said the GOI is strongly interested in IREC-2010 covering biomass, waste-to-energy, solar, city-to-city partnerships, rural impact, grid connectivity, and workable business models for promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) On March 2 and 3, 2009, Ambassador Harnish; Virginia Sonntag-O'Brien, Head of Secretariat, Renewable Energy Policy Network 21 (REN21); and Griffin Thompson, Senior Energy Advisor; met with six GOI ministries and the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), held a roundtable for private sector renewable energy companies, and attended a dinner for the California Energy Commission sponsored by a forum of Indian electricity regulators. The delegation delivered detailed presentations on the lessons learned from the 2008 WIREC, attended by over 9000 people from 125 countries -- as well as from the 2004 Bonn Renewable Conference and 2005 Beijing International Renewable Energy Conference. The delegation provided Indian interlocutors with suggestions for the Indian IREC 2010. The delegation was joined at certain meetings by representatives of the German government -- led by Ernst Stoeckl-Pukall, Economic and Commercial Counselor, FRG Embassy in New Delhi -- who indicated their strong support for IREC 2010.

13. (U) Government of India participants included:

-- Ms. Gauri Singh, Joint Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE);
-- Mr. Deepak Gupta, Secretary, MNRE;
-- Mr. S. Sudareshan, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MPNG);
-- Mr. Apurva Chandra, Joint Secretary, MPNG;
-- Dr. Ajay Mathur, Director General, Bureau of Energy Efficiency

(BEE), Ministry of Power;
-- Mr. Gireesh B. Pradhan, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Power;
-- Mr. Virendra Gupta, Additional Secretary (Investment and Trade Policy and Energy Security), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA);
-- Dr. S.P. Seth, Special Secretary, Ministry of Coal;
-- Mr. Pravat Mandal, Advisor, Ministry of Coal;
-- Mr. R.R. Rashmi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF).

MINISTRY OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY (MNRE) HAS LEAD

14. (U) MNRE Joint Secretary Ms. Gauri Singh has been tasked with overall coordination for IREC 2010. At her solo meeting with the delegation on March 2, she stated that the upcoming general election in India scheduled for April and May, 2009 will not have an impact on India's commitment towards renewable energy or to hosting IREC 2010. She confirmed that the conference has been scheduled for February 17-19, 2010 with a venue site at the India Expo Centre located in Greater Noida, which is about 40 minutes drive time southeast of New Delhi. The GOI recently held its first inter-ministerial meeting on IREC 2010 and has chosen McKinsey & Company as its knowledge partner, she said. MNRE director Rajiv Arora told us they are still in the process of identifying an agency to manage the logistics for IREC.

15. (U) J/S Singh informed the delegation that MNRE will start working on the themes for IREC 2010 and intends to have a general framework prepared and circulated by the end of March. She said that -- since renewable energy (RE) in India is private sector driven -- the MNRE wants the main theme for IREC 2010 to be discussion of successful business models that promote adoption,

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scaling-up, technology transfer, and private investments in renewable energy. Coupled with the business model theme would be discussion of types of central and local government policy interventions that promote such viable private sector models. Government policy to encourage research and development on renewable energy is another potential theme, she said. J/S Singh welcomed the delegation's suggestion to involve local municipalities, state electricity regulators, and local leaders to champion the RE cause because RE policy, although driven by the central government, is implemented at local levels. J/S Singh said MNRE seeks broad participation from developing countries and she discussed funding options for their participation. Ambassador Harnish explained that he had sought and obtained international scholarships from developed countries to pay travel expenses for less developed countries to WIREC in 2008.

16. (SBU) J/S Singh indicated the issue of pledges regarding voluntary commitments to adopt RE -- over 140 of which were made at WIREC including 31 from the USG -- was sensitive within the GOI as there was concern that pledges made at WIREC 208 or IREC 2010 may impact climate negotiations under the UNFCCC. She asked the delegation to raise the pledge issue with her superior, MNRE Secretary Deepak Gupta, along with a proposal to utilize the REN21 Steering Committee as the international advisory board for planning IREC 2010 and a suggestion to change the dates of the Indian IREC to piggy-back on to R.K. Pachauri's Delhi Sustainable Development Summit scheduled for February 4-6, 2010.

17. (SBU) The delegation met with MNRE Secretary Gupta with J/S Singh later on March 2. Ambassador Harnish gave his presentation on WIREC noting: the importance of inter-agency cooperation; the utility of a global business conference held alongside the plenary session, which allowed ministers and businessmen to interact and discuss both policy and technology; and the importance of early engagement with NGO and industry partners. He stressed to Secretary Gupta that the most significant lesson learned from WIREC was the need to determine an agenda and to lock in key speakers as early as possible. The WIREC agenda had not been finalized until four months before the conference and it would have been greatly beneficial to have finalized it earlier, Ambassador Harnish said.

18. (SBU) MNRE Secretary Gupta indicated he wanted IREC 2010 to focus

on small-scale biomass power generation of around 100 kilowatts. He stated that he did not want to have IREC 2010 associated in any way with the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit -- stressing that IREC would focus solely on promoting renewable energy whereas the Sustainable Development Summit had a broader theme of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. He said that, in addition to a strong IREC 2010 focus on wind and solar, there is also a lot of interest in India in waste-to-energy projects and some interest in geothermal heat pumps. Green buildings, green cities, and energy efficiency should also be featured at IREC 2010, Gupta suggested. Gupta stated he did not feel there had been any movement on cooperative research and development in RE and so he did not want to focus on it at the conference. Ambassador Harnish stated that Secretary Gupta would likely find that, if the broad themes of the conference are well chosen correct, then people around the world would eagerly attend to demonstrate the best technological solutions available.

¶9. (U) In response to Virginia Sonntag-O'Brien's offer to use the June 2009 Renewable Energy Policy Network 21 (REN21) Secretariat meeting in June 2009 to assist in planning IREC 2010, MNRE Secretary Gupta offered to host the committee meeting in New Delhi. Griffin Thompson suggested that the Renewable Energy taskforce of the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP) could also play a role. Ms. Singh indicated the themes of IREC 2010 should be inter-sectoral and cross-cutting.

¶10. (SBU) Ambassador Harnish raised the issue of pledges and stated IREC pledges have no impact on UNFCCC negotiations. He noted the importance of pledges to stimulate real action on RE and explained the USG announced it would be accepting pledges six months in advance of WIREC as well as last moment pledges at the conference that were announced during the plenary. Impressed with the presentation, Secretary Gupta stated the GOI Solar Mission could be its pledge at IREC 2010.

Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)

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¶11. (SBU) Ministry of Power's BEE Director General Ajay Mathur told the delegation that he saw renewable energy and energy efficiency (EE) as two sides of the same coin. Griffin Thompson noted IREC 2010 would be an excellent forum to showcase the integration of EE and RE, particularly in the building sector which would give the conference a particularly Indian stamp. After the delegation's presentation, Mathur stated BEE was willing to support IREC 2010, including financially, and indicated that a combination of policy support, good regulation, and increased development of RE technologies could be a highlight of IREC 2010.

Ministry of Environment and Forests

¶12. (SBU) Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) Joint Secretary Mr. R.R. Rashmi informed the delegation of the Climate Technology Conference of Oct 22-23, 2009. Mr. R.K. Sethi, Director for Climate Change said the MOEF is keen on U.S. support for the 2009 technology conference, and felt the 2009 conference can be a good way to gauge the interest for the 2010 IREC. Mr. Sethi also mentioned that having the Climate Technology Conference closer to the IREC was not a possibility as they wished to host it before the Copenhagen conference of December 2009. Mr. Rashmi underscored the value of due deliberation on the themes for the IREC suggesting they be structured imaginatively and constructively.

Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MPNG)

¶13. (SBU) Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MPNG) Additional Secretary S. Sundareshan noted that MPNG and its public sector companies are interested in bio-fuels both as producers and purchasers of ethanol and bio-diesel, including for blending 5% ethanol in petrol (gasoline). Ambassador Harnish outlined USG bio-fuels promotion policy and highlighted participation in WIREC-2008's bio-fuels component by USDA, USEPA, and USDOE,

including addressing how to put public policy in place to unleash market adoption and scaling up of bio-fuels. Sundareshan outlined India's current bio-fuels policy and expressed interest in IREC-2010 addressing policies for promoting bio-fuels development and adoption in India and the developing world. He noted described current problems for India's biofuels, including a drop in sugar production and the plunge in world petroleum prices. MPNG is committed to supporting and actively participating in IREC-2010 with MNRE as the lead agency, Sundareshan said.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)

¶14. (SBU) Virendra Gupta, MEA Additional Secretary for Investment and Trade Policy and for Energy Security, -- who attended the WIREC-2008 meeting -- pledged MEA support for IREC-2010 under MNRE's lead and discussed arrangements in detail. He cautioned that Indian ministries are sensitive about their own turf, adding that MEA will work to coordinate GOI support for MNRE's management of IREC. After Gupta departs his MEA post in April, his subordinate, MEA Joint Secretary (for Energy Security) Sanjay Verma, will be the MEA point of contact to support MNRE on IREC, Virendra Gupta said. He added that MEA sees great direct benefit for India in its hosting IREC-2010.

¶15. (SBU) MEA will provide MNRE with foreign policy guidance and diplomatic support, including having India's ambassadors and embassies engage early on with host countries' energy and foreign affairs ministries to promote world-wide participation by officials, businesses and NGOs, Virendra Gupta pledged. Ambassador Harnish noted that then-Secretary of State Rice had sent a letter to her counterparts nine months before WIREC urging attendance. Gupta responded that the GOI/MEA should wait until after the upcoming elections result in a new government being formed in June 2009, and then propose having the new GOI foreign minister issue invitation letters for IREC-2010. Gupta also requested close collaboration with MEA on fund raising to subsidize attendance by energy official of more needy developing countries, especially in view of the world financial crisis.

¶16. (SBU) Virendra Gupta added that India has joined the FRG-promoted International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), despite USG concerns (refs D,E), because the GOI wants to have a voice at IRENA and because India is still not eligible to be a member of the

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International Energy Agency (IEA). He also noted problems in India's bio-fuels policy implementation due to falling sugar cane production and plunging world petroleum prices.

Ministry of Coal

¶17. (SBU) Dr. S.P. Seth, Special Secretary, Ministry of Coal -- who is also co-chair of the U.S.-India Energy Dialogue's Coal Working Group -- and Advisor Pravat Mandal detailed coal's current and future predominance in providing India's energy needs. Coal-fired thermal power accounts for 53% of India's total installed power generation capacity and 65% to 68% of India's total production of electricity. Seth added that renewable solar energy was "dear to his heart," especially since he earned his Ph.D. in solar physics. Seth said the Ministry of Coal will support IREC. He reviewed related programs under the APP Coal Mining Task Force and the U.S.-India Energy Dialogue's Coal Working Group such as:
-- the November 2008 kick-off of the Coal Bed Methane Coal Mine Methane (CBM/CMM) Information Clearing House in Ranchi, Jharkhand; and
-- the Methane-to-Markets Partnership.

Ministry of Power

¶18. (SBU) Mr. Gireesh B. Pradhan, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Power -- who is also co-chair of the U.S.-India Energy Dialogue's Power and Energy Efficiency Working Group (P&EE WG) -- detailed progress on several bilateral projects and APP multi-lateral

projects for energy efficiency and for integrating renewable-source electricity production into power grids. He singled out:

- the Joint Task Force on Integrated Gas and Combined Cycle;
- Bureau of Energy Efficiency cooperation with USAID on energy service company (ESCO) programs;
- USAID's the Distribution Reforms, Upgrades, and Management (DRUM) Training Program; and
- Information Exchanges with U.S. Rural Electricity Cooperatives.

¶19. (SBU) Pradhan said the Ministry of Power welcomes any effort to work on renewable energy and is "wholeheartedly" in favor of collaborating with the MNRE on making IREC a success. He also underscored that energy ministries are sensitive about their own turf and that his ministry will seek to work smoothly with MNRE. In addition to transfer of RE and EE technology on a commercial basis, Pradhan recommended finding arrangements for tech transfer on a non-commercial basis to India and other developing countries through assistance programs and funding. He noted the Ministry Power's cooperation with the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission to facilitate power grid connectivity and interaction for renewable-sourced power, and suggested a strong focus on this issue at IREC, especially technical and commercial aspects.

¶20. (SBU) COMMENT: Ambassador Harnish's delegation and engagement with the GOI could not have come at a better time as with less than one year before IREC 2010, it was clear the GOI had barely begun to consider the logistics requirements of an international conference of this scale. MNRE Secretary Gupta, who will have a large say in the shape of IREC 2010, focused mainly on very small scale technologies and was initially reluctant to think big on what IREC 2010 could mean for India and RE worldwide. However, by the end of the meeting, he stated MNRE would actively engage industry, seek out the best speakers, and devote considerable time and energy to making IREC 2010 a world class event. END COMMENT.

¶21. This cable has been cleared by Griffin Thompson at the direction of Ambassador Harnish.

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